

A Report to the 37th District

State Representative Eric Pettigrew

**Olympia Office:**

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Phone: 360-786-7838

Toll-free: 1-800-562-6000

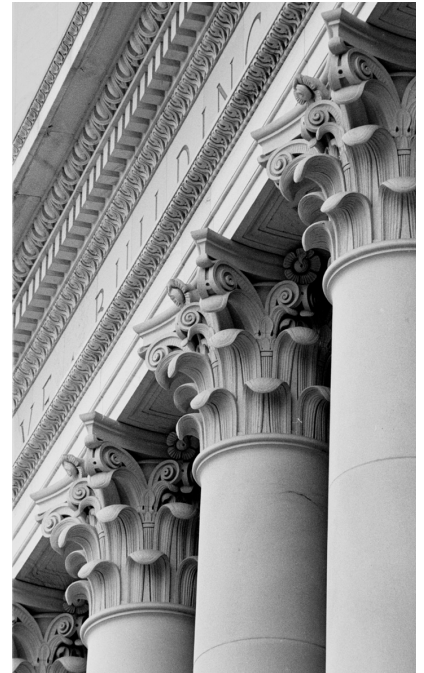
TDD: 1-800-635-9993

Email: Pettigrew.Eric@leg.wa.gov

Website: www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/pettigrew/

Committees:

- Community & Economic Development & Trade (*Vice Chair*)
- Appropriations
- Early Learning & Children's Services



A Report to the 37th District

STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Eric Pettigrew

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

PRSR STD
US POSTAGE PAID
WA STATE DEPT
OF PRINTING 98501

Printed on recycled paper



State Representative

Eric Pettigrew

Mail:

P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Keeping in Touch:

Toll-free Hotline: 800-562-6000
TDD: 1-800-635-9993
Olympia Office: 360-786-7838

E-mail:

pettigrew.eric@leg.wa.gov

Web site:

www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/members/pettigrew/

Committees:

- Community & Economic Development & Trade
(*Vice Chair*)
- Appropriations
- Early Learning & Children's Services

January 2008

A Report to the 37th District

Dear neighbors,

I believe listening to you – and keeping you informed – is important to keep our democracy healthy and strong. It's an honor and a privilege to serve as your representative, and I appreciate each of you who've taken the time to call me or write.

This newsletter is my chance to tell you about some issues I'm working on for the 2008 session:

Education - Closing the achievement gap so every student, rich or poor, black or white, can succeed.

Poverty - What can we do differently to tackle this problem?

Hunger - There's a growing need for food banks to help hungry families, and we can do a better job of reaching them.

Health care - I've been pushing hard on ways Washington state can win the fight against sickle-cell anemia.

Child care - Our kids deserve the best, and new research shows the earliest years matter most. I'm advocating for better training and pay for teachers, workers and directors at our child care centers.

This newsletter isn't big enough to talk about all the issues that will come up. Every two years, we consider upwards of four thousand pieces of legislation. If you have questions or comments about a specific bill, please drop me an e-mail or call the Hotline.

After we adjourn, I'll send a second newsletter telling you what happened on the biggest issues of the 2008 session.

Thank you again for taking the time to read this newsletter. I've enjoyed being home all summer and fall, and I hope to see many of you when I come back home after House finishes its business.

Sincerely yours,

Eric Pettigrew
State Representative

37th District

State Representative **Eric Pettigrew**

EDUCATION: EVERY CHILD DESERVE A CHANCE

Our state constitution says that education is our paramount duty. It's our job to give every child – rich or poor, black or white or brown – a top-quality education so they have a fair shot at life.

That's not happening today.



Brown vs. Board of Education ended segregated schools, and that's good. What didn't end is the difference in what our children actually learn, even if they're under the same school roof.

Children of color are not being given an equal chance in school and life. They're more likely to score under the standards on math and reading. More likely to drop out of school. The achievement gap is real, and it's hurting too many kids.

As a father, I believe every child is innocent and deserves a great education. As a lawmaker, I know we all pay the price when so many kids are left out of the American Dream.

I say we can do better. That it's our duty to do better for our kids.

This session, I'll introduce legislation to close the achievement gap.

We have programs now aimed at fixing this problem. Those programs haven't solved the problem because they're one-size-fits all. It's wrong to lump every child of color together. There's a lack of recognition of cultural differences among students, the different languages and social history and parental involvement.

Different groups of kids face different issues. Yes, we should have broad programs that try to close the achievement gap. But we also must target groups of students and track them to make sure we're making real progress every year, because these aren't just numbers on a page – every one of these numbers is a real child with a real future. We have to do our best for them.

	10th grade reading, met WASL standard	10th grade math, met WASL standard	Drop-out rate
White	85	56	17
African-American	65	23	25
Hispanic	66	26	30
American-Indian	68	31	36

Read to succeed

Reading is the foundation for all learning. Our kids do well on reading in elementary school. It's in high school that we're facing the biggest problem.

More than 9,000 students in the class of 2008 haven't met the reading standard. Unless that changes, they won't graduate.

We need to give those kids a chance to succeed. They need to boost their reading comprehension skills.

The problem is our high school English teachers are mostly trained to teach literary analysis, essay writing and world literature. They're not as trained or experienced in teaching the reading comprehension skills our kids need to graduate.

This session, I'll introduce a bill to boost reading for our high school and junior high students, because if our kids can't read, they can't succeed.

Keeping kids in school

If a student isn't in the classroom, how can they learn?

Too many kids are absent from school. You can draw a straight line from absences and truancy to low achievement and drop-out rates.

The stereotype about these kids is wrong. They're not dumb. In fact, some of the smartest kids are the ones who drop out – and it's because they're bored. School isn't challenging enough.

We can do a better job of reaching these kids and keeping them in school.

I wrote legislation (House Bill 2306) that will help give more kids a chance. This legislation would require school districts to collect and report the actual numbers of kids who are disciplined or referred for truancy, along with the demographic information we need – gender, ethnicity, race, English language proficiency – that we need to target the causes of these problems.

A Report to the 37th District

The goal is making sure every student stays in school and gets the education they need. The alternative means more kids with low test scores and more high school dropouts, and that's just a guarantee for a lifetime of struggles and poverty. I'll push hard for this reform so we can keep more kids in school.

Handcuffing students is wrong

Some schools – including one in south King County – have made a habit of handcuffing students. Down in Florida, the cops were called for a kindergartener throwing a fit. They put handcuffs on this five-year-old and threw her into the back of a squad car.

This is a little nuts. Our kids aren't criminals on death row. They're students.

I support legislation to make sure schools train their security staff to calm things don't have security staff who first move it to slap cuffs on students. If there's a violent situation, a kid with a knife or a gun, OK – but that wasn't the case in south King County, and 99.9 percent of the time, handcuffs aren't needed.

This law would require security officers to use other techniques and save handcuffs for real emergencies.

FINDING NEW WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY

What causes poverty? How do you help families climb out of it?

We know some answers, and we've had success in reducing poverty. Yet the battle isn't won. I'm supporting an effort to look at the causes of poverty – it's not just one factor, or we could wield a single solution – and which reforms reduce poverty.

When a family moves from poverty to the working class or middle class, we all win.

HUNGER

Even with a strong economy, our local food banks are busy. A lot of working families are going hungry.

To me, it's a moral issue. We have the privilege of living in the richest nation in the world, the only superpower. Nobody should be struggling to avoid starvation in America.

To meet the growing demand, I'm requesting a number of changes:

- *Help more families* – Right now, the standards are obsolete. A little more than half of the working poor are eligible for food stamps. Half. That's not right, and it should change.
- *Hunger czar* – We could help more hungry families with our limited money if somebody was coordinating all the various state, local and private groups working on hunger. I support funds in the budget to hire a statewide hunger czar.
- *Farmers to Food Banks* – I also support a pilot project that matches farmers with food banks. This links our local farmers with neighbors in need.

HEALTH CARE

Sickle-cell anemia is a problem for too many citizens in Washington state.

In 2008, I'll push to improve screening, diagnosis and treatment of this disease, along with better education about the illness. We also need to review who has access to treatment, who's getting information about the disease, family risk, how health insurers are covering the illness and mortality rates.

If my ideas get funded in the budget, a committee on sickle cell anemia would make its recommendations by Dec. 1, 2008.

TOP-QUALITY CHILD CARE

New research shows that the first few years of your child's life are the most important for their brain's development and success in school.

We took a huge step toward better child care when we passed a law creating the cabinet-level Department of Early Learning.

I'm working on legislation to improve the quality of care and education for our youngest children. It's a shame that a person with a master's degree in early learning can make twice as much teaching kindergarten than if they taught four-year-olds at a child-care center with a pre-school.

To improve the quality of education our kids are receiving, we have to boost the pay and training of teachers and workers at child care centers. My bill would establish two statewide bargaining units for all child care workers and directors so they can negotiate with the state over training, professional development standards, access to benefits and state subsidies for child care.

